

NEWS RELEASE

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Wetland Professional Certification Protects Against Environmental, Financial Losses

New regulatory program helps improve management of important natural resource

RICHMOND – Beginning this month, Virginia will provide landowners, developers, and local governments with a pool of competent and experienced wetland professionals. Wetland delineation – the outlining or demarcation of wetland areas including swamps, bogs, and marshes – is often necessary to comply with federal and state laws. When performed incorrectly, wetland delineation can result in financial losses, project delays, and legal violations.

The Virginia Board for Professional Soil Scientists and Wetland Professionals now offers a voluntary certification program for individuals who perform wetland delineation services. The General Assembly established state certification in recognition of the need for formal training and testing in this area of environmental protection. Certified Professional Wetland Delineators must demonstrate specialized technical expertise, including techniques based on hydrology, soil science, and plant ecology.

“Engaging the services of a Certified Professional Wetland Delineator will help avert common problems,” said Louise Fontaine Ware, director of the agency that houses the Board. “Consumers may rely on certification to ensure adequate training, education, and experience.”

Even simple errors by inexperienced or unqualified delineators can create complications, such as these examples offered by the Virginia Association of Wetland Professionals:

- A multi-million dollar commercial development was delayed for more than one year, and became the subject of a federal enforcement case, after delineators failed to identify wetlands on the project site.
- A New England consulting firm misidentified several plants, costing a utility company over \$50,000 in added costs.
- By overestimating wetlands, a consultant delayed construction of an industrial site and cost the developer an additional \$30,000 to obtain an accurate delineation.

The General Assembly created the wetland professional designation in 2002, directing the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation to implement certification effective July 2004. Incorporated within an existing environmental professional regulatory program, the wetland professional certification protects against harm inflicted by improper delineations.

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About DPOR and the Board for Professional Soil Scientists and Wetland Professionals:

The Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) administers and enforces laws regulating 31 commercial occupations and certain professions. The agency licenses or certifies more than 260,000 individuals and businesses ranging from architects and contractors to cosmetologists and professional wrestlers.

The Board for Professional Soil Scientists and Wetland Professionals is composed of three certified professional soil scientists, three certified professional wetland delineators, and one citizen member.

For more information, visit DPOR online at www.dpor.virginia.gov.